LESSONS FROM

MUHARRAM AND AASHURA

HAZRAT MAULANA YUNUS PATEL SAHEB
(RAHMATULLAHI 'ALAYH)

Every year, when the blessed month of Muharram enters, we are reminded of certain incidents: The Hijrah, The Day of Aashura and The Martyrdom of Sayyidina Husain (رَضِیَ اللہ عَنْہُ). These are generally the topics of discussion in the month of Muharram and Insha-Allah, something will be said in respect to each one.

The Hijrah

During the Khilafat of Hazrat Umar (رَضِیَ اللہ عَنْہُ), Islam had spread far and wide and there was a need to have some kind of date for the correspondence that was being sent out. Hazrat Umar (رَضِیَ اللہ عَنْہُ) thus consulted with the Sahaaba-e-Kiraam (رَضِیَ اللہ عَنْهُمْ) as to when the calendar should begin. Different views were presented before Hazrat Umar (رَضِیَ اللہ عَنْہُ) wisely declared that the calendar begin with the Hijrah.

Many lessons are taken from this decision :

In this month of Muharram we are reminded of the great sacrifices made for the Deen of Islam. Rasulullah (صَلیٰاللہُعَلیْہِوَسَلَّم) and his companions had to leave their beloved Makkah Mukarramah, their homes, and even

their families and that too after a long and trying period of immense persecution, torture and trials.

The month of Muharram delivers us to the days of Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and we see the many trials and difficulties that the Beloved of Allah Ta'ala (صلى الله عليه وسلم) underwent. As we turn the pages of history, we see the three solid years of ostracism which were so patiently endured, despite the extreme and severe conditions, where food and drink and other necessities of life were cut off from the Muslims.

We take a glimpse at the grief and sorrow that burdened the heart of Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) when his beloved wife, Hazrat Khadija (رَضِىَ الله عَنْهَا) passed away; his support and his companion through those trying times. Then followed the loss of his uncle, Abu Talib, who had also been a means of support and protection. The year was thus called **'The year of grief'.**

We turn another page and we behold the cruel experiences which Nabi (صلى الله عليه وسلم) endured in Taif : The rejection, the scorn, the mockery and the stoning. …Of whom? The greatest after Allah Ta'ala.

And as we turn more pages of history, we read of the culmination of all the evil plans and plots, with the decision to assassinate Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم). This was the setting which opened the door to the Hijrah. Family, property, land …everything was sacrificed on the instruction of Allah Ta'ala to migrate from Makkah Mukarramah to Madina Munawwarah.

Life was a constant struggle : Overcoming one obstacle meant being confronted by another and yet another – but there was no losing hope, no despondency. Just absolute trust and unwavering faith in Allah Ta'ala.

On every occasion there was the assurance that Allah Ta'ala was with. …How beautiful and comforting the words of Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم) to Hazrat Abu Bakr (رَضِيَ الله عَنْهُ) during their perilous stay in the cave of Thaur… **"Don't be sad. Verily Allah is with us."**

So these incidents – which run into thousands – are lessons for mankind till the Day of Qiyaamah, more especially, we who are Muslims.

Reflecting over that period of struggle and we learn that if we say that we believe and that we have submitted, then we too will face different challenges, tests and trials,

toil and struggle, and sacrifices will have to be rendered for this Imaan and for this beautiful Deen of Islam.

At the same time, each incident offers consolation to us all : If Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his faithful companions could have undergone such severe trials, then what are our trials in comparison?

Life in this world will never be smooth sailing. There will always be some tests and some kind of sacrifices. For many of us, it is the small test of getting up for Fajr or giving up sins. What great sacrifice is there in this? Compare it to the sacrifices of the Sahaaba-e-Kiraam.

In today's time, a little difficulty comes the person's way and the person gives up his Deen; a little test and the person accepts another religion. اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَ اِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُوْن.

Our lives will offer us a share of struggle : The tests we face are sometimes in our home life, sometimes with family or neighbours, sometimes in business, sometimes at the schools, colleges, and universities … but we should keep before us these exceptional incidents from the life of Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the lives of his noble companions, of sacrifice and endurance **against all odds.**

The Hijrah of the Sahabah-e-Kiraam was such an amazing and remarkable expression of sincere love, with most of them leaving behind and sacrificing everything for Allah Ta'ala and His Rasul (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to establish this Deen of Islam.

As for us : Our Hijrah is to give up sins. Sins which should not even be in our lives! Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:
"And a (true) emigrant is he who abandons all wrongs and sins."

The true Muhajir is that person who gives up that which Allah Ta'ala has prohibited. His hijrah is from that which has been declared Haraam – whether adultery and fornication, drugs and other intoxicants, interest taking and giving, music and dance or any other Haraam.

My Shaykh, Hazrat Maulana Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar Saheb (DB) says in poetry:

"It is incumbent to abandon sins also;
The true hijrat is not just giving up one's town."

This is the demand of faith, of love, and of loyalty. Let us prove our faith and love to Allah Ta'ala.

The Day of Aashura

Amongst the days declared as having esteem and greatness in the sight of Allah Ta'ala is the 10th of Muharram, the Day of Aashura. It is a very significant day – not from now, not from the time of Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Allah Ta'ala had chosen this day from the time the heavens and earth were created.

The Ulama have explained that initially, the fast of Aashura was Fardh (compulsory). However, when the fasts of Ramadaan became Fardh, this fast of the 10th of Muharram, became a Sunnah. Thus, if a person wishes to fast, then Alhamdulillah; and if the person does not wish to observe the fast, then there is no sin upon him.

Therefore, those who are keeping the fast should not adopt a 'holier than thou' attitude and make anyone feel ashamed, for not observing the fast. That which Allah Ta'ala and His Rasul (صلى الله عليه وسلم) have not made compulsory, we should not force upon others. Yes, we can and we should encourage towards righteous deeds, but we cannot look down upon anyone who does not practise upon that which is optional.

If the person keeps it then he will be greatly rewarded with forgiveness of his sins for the past year – i.e. the minor sins which the person had committed. Major sins require sincere taubah (repentance).

Rasulullah (صَلىاللهُعَليْهِوَسَلَم) was asked regarding the fast of the day of Aashura. Rasulullah (صَلىاللهُعَليْهِوَسَلَم) replied: **"It is a compensation for the (minor) sins of the past year."**

(Sahih Muslim)

Abdullah ibn Abbaas (رَضِىَ الله عَنْهُ) said: "I did not see Rasulullah (صَلىاللهُعَليْهِوَسَلَم) anxiously await the fast of any day, which he gave preference to over other days, but this day, the Day of Aashura."

(Sahih Bukhari)

It is mentioned that when Rasulullah (صَلىاللهُعَليْهِوَسَلَم) arrived in Madina Munawwarah, he found the Jews fasting on the Day of Aashura and enquired of them: 'What is this day on which you fast?'

They replied : 'This is a great day. On this day, Allah saved Musa (عَليْهِ السَّلام) and his people and drowned Fir`aun and his people. Thus Musa (عَليْهِ السَّلام) fasted on this day as a token of thanksgiving, therefore we too fast on this day."

Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'We are more worthy of Musa and nearer to him than you." Thereafter, Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) fasted on this day and ordered his companions to keep a fast on this day.

However Rasulullah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) expressed his disapproval in keeping the fast in the **exact** manner as the Jews did. Thus, he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **"Observe the fast of Aashura and oppose the Jews. Fast a day before it or a day after."**

(Bayhaqi)

Even in Ibaadah, Nabi (صلى الله عليه وسلم) instructed that we not do exactly as the disbelievers do. He did not say that we should not fast, because there is nothing wrong with the fast. However, he made the change so that our Ibadat is not exactly like that of the Jews.

What a clear message is found in this narration! How can we then accept the customary practices of the disbelievers? If they are celebrating with fire-crackers, our children will be one step ahead of them. And if we do not light any fireworks ourselves, we enjoy the fireworks display on those festive occasions of theirs.

Christmas will come and how many Muslims will celebrate in some way or the other – just as the

Christians do. Every occasion, which is regarded in their faith and religion as an auspicious occasion, has become part of the Muslim life. Many a time we go to the extent where we take enjoyment from the religious festivities. **Our interaction and integration with them brings about a disintegration of our Imaan.**

Generosity on the Day of Aashura

There is a Hadith which certain Scholars consider reliable and acceptable, wherein Nabi (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم) said, **"One who generously spends on his family on the day of Aashura, Allah will increase (his provision) for the whole year."**

(Bayhaqi)

Deen is simple to practice upon. Deen is moderate and balanced and this Hadith, in no way, calls for extravagance and wastage. The encouragement is not towards having 7 course and 9 course meals. …The person who extends his provision for his family, by adding one or two things to the dastarkhan on the Day of Aashura, Allah will increase his provision. Allah Ta'ala will give Barakah (blessings).

If this is the reward on spending on one's family, when we enjoy so much every day, then how much more barakah Allah Ta'ala will give if we extended that generosity to the poor, needy and destitute – those who would deeply appreciate it. …Even a little to those who are near or around us, who are in dire circumstances – sometimes needing help to pay off rent, light and water bills, or in need of food and other basic requirements. By taking care of such people, imagine how much more provision Allah Ta'ala will grant.

I say again : we have to consider the audience of Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم). They were the Sahaaba-e-Kiraam who were already obedient to Allah Ta'ala. They had established Salaah in their lives, they paid their Zakaat, they fasted the month of Ramadaan, they waged jihaad, they fulfilled the rights of all. There was no question of sins, let alone persistence in sins like what we find in our lives. There was no question of deception, dishonesty or other evil qualities.

We cannot even get up for Fajr and fill up the Masjid. …If we continue in the way of disobedience – neglecting the Faraaidh and other duties, then we can only dream of barakah in our sustenance.

Islam is a whole. It is not isolated to just one or two things. Just practising on this one Hadith of spending on our families on Aashura is not sufficient. Daily, we are soaked in sins. Despite listening to nasihat and other programmes of Deen, we remain at square one … In fact, many do everything wrong and even advertise their sins. How can we then expect Allah Ta'ala's Mercy?

Whilst there is no losing hope in His Mercy because He is Very Merciful and Most Forgiving, we should not forget that His grip is also severe. Allah Ta'ala gives us many chances but when He makes a decision, then no power can prevent His Punishment.

Allah Ta'ala is Forgiving and Loving. He has given us this blessed day of Aashura, so that we repent and make changes in our lives. If we do, then Allah Ta'ala is willing to accept us. Allah Ta'ala does not want us to go into Jahannum; He wants to see us enter Jannat. Allah Ta'ala forgave a nation on this Mubarak Day of Aashura; so we should maximise on the opportunity with abundant Istighfaar and taubah.

The Day of Aashura is not a day to engage in sins. It should be a day free of sins. Completely free. And our entire lives should then become the same.

Experience of the Ahlullah

Whilst the following is not a Hadith, it is the experience of the Mashaa'ik and Ahlullah …and we limit it to that. We do not say that it is Qur`aan and Hadith, but we can draw benefit from the good and wise counsel of the Mashaa`ik :

If a person makes up his mind, is sincere and is determined, and commences some good deed on the Day of Aashura or brings about a change in his life for the better, giving up his bad habits and weaknesses, then Insha-Allah, this will be the medium of taufeeq to continue in that line of righteousness.

It may be that the person has a drug addiction or porn addiction or gambling addiction – but he makes up his mind that on this day of the 10th of Muharram, he will restrain himself, give it up, and makes dua that Allah Ta'ala makes this a means of total change, then Insha-Allah, through the barakah of Aashura, he will maintain istiqaamat … so long as he keeps far away from those avenues and venues of sins, and distances himself from company that will take him back to sins.

So many people gave up some bad habit on the 10th of Muharram and Alhamdulillah, they did not return to it. They were sincere in their taubah. They cried and teared before Allah Ta'ala and asked for courage and himmat. Allah Ta'ala assisted them in giving up their sins.

The Day of Aashura is a day wherein Allah Ta'ala gave salvation to people in the past and a day wherein He accepts duas. Allah Ta'ala's doors of Maghfirat and forgiveness are ever-open. Just as we have Laylatul Qadr and Laylatul Bara`ah, we have blessed days such as Eidhul Adha, Eidul Fitr and Yaume Aashurah.

Just as we prepare ourselves for the big nights, let us also prepare ourselves for this blessed day and set aside some time for ibaadah, for Istighfaar and taubah.

The Shahadat of Hazrat Husain (RA)

The shahadat of Hazrat Husain (رَضِيَ الله عَنْهُ) was indeed a very tragic incident - the grandson of Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم) was martyred at Karbala on this day of Aashura. Due to the greatness of the day, we say that Allah Ta'ala multiplied his rewards. Beating the chest, injuring oneself, stabbing oneself, and mourning in an extreme manner is not Islam.

Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم) gave his uncle, Hazrat Hamza (رَضِىَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) the title of Sayyidush-Shuhada, yet there was no such extremism in mourning him. So many members from the Ahle Bait were martyred, but there was no such fanatical, senseless and baseless mourning, continuing on the same note, year in and year out.

We ask Allah Ta'ala to elevate those pious souls, grant them higher stages and we send sawaab for them, but what is done in the name of Imam Husain (رَضِىَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) gives a very wrong impression of Islam. In fact, it has nothing to do with Islam. The different schools of thought (mazaahib) do not accept such behaviour. It is not permissible to participate or even watch such processions.

We take another lesson from the incident of Karbala: Despite being on the plains of Karbala in such a threatening and dangerous circumstance, not one Salaah was missed. Moreover, Hazrat Husain (رَضِىَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) still continued reading Qur`aan Sharief and still maintained the purdah of his family, and despite all the hardships faced, remained a rock of patience. SubhanAllah. …Our condition is a far cry. A wedding, party, braai or a sports

match and we miss Salaah upon Salaah; together with compromising on so many other aspects of Deen.

Let us make this month of Muharram the stepping stone to obedience to Allah Ta’ala and Rasulullah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم). …Where there is a will, there’s a way. Where there is a sincere effort in the right direction, we will find the assistance of Allah Ta’ala.

Allah Ta’ala grant us correct understanding of Deen and the taufeeq to practise on our knowledge.